NORMAL FIRE REHABILITATION PLAN SUPPLEMENT
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
AND
DECISION RECORD
DEE GOLD FIRE (X-283)
BLM/EK/PL-2001/067

Finding of No Significant Impact:

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in Normal Fire Rehabilitation Plan Supplement Environmental Assessment BLM/EK/PL-2001/067, I have determined that the proposed action will not have significant impacts on the human environment and that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

Decision:

It is my decision to implement the Normal Fire Rehabilitation Plan (NFRP) Supplement as described in the Environmental Assessment for the Dee Gold Fire BLM/PL-2001/067. Approximately 316 acres of public rangeland managed by the Bureau of Land Management Elko Field Office were burned during this fire. Less than 0.5 mile of fence will be repaired. Approximately 2 miles of dozer line will be rehabilitated and inventoried for cultural resources. Monitoring of the burn for infestation of noxious weeds will be conducted. Post-fire grazing management, including the period of time needed for closure, will be determined based on monitoring and achievement of site specific resource objectives.

Rationale:

Implementation of the proposed action described in the NFRP Supplement EA for the Dee Gold Fire will protect soils in the burned area, including preventing potential loss of soil due to wind and water erosion; will reduce potential invasion and establishment of noxious weeds and cheatgrass; will provide quality forage for livestock and wildlife; and will facilitate meeting established standards and guidelines for livestock grazing.

The Elko RMP is silent for the proposed action. The proposed action is consistent with the objectives of the RMP and is consistent with federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and plans to the maximum extent possible

Monitoring:

Post-treatment monitoring studies will be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed treatments and to determine the time frame for reopening lands for grazing.

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Helen Hankins
Elko Field Office

Date

NORMAL FIRE REHABILITATION PLAN SUPPLEMENT
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
DEE GOLD FIRE (X-283)
BLM/EK/PL-2001/067

Introduction:

This Supplement Environmental Assessment (EA) tiers to the Elko Field Office FY 2000 Normal Fire Rehabilitation Plan Environmental Assessment (NRFPEA) BLM/EK/PL2000/037. The Proposed Action includes NFRPEA Treatment # 1 (Grazing closure), 5 (Dozer line rehabilitation), 8 (Invasive, nonnative weed species control), and 10 (Cultural resource site stabilization and protection). The format of this Supplement EA follows the outline in the Emergency Fire Rehabilitation Handbook, BLM Manual Handbook H-1742-1 dated 7/27/99 and is consistent with the draft Interagency Burned Area Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Handbook, Version 1.0, dated 6/14/01.

List of Preparers:

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Project Area Description:

A. Fire Description:

The Dee Gold Fire was started by a lightning strike and was reported on August 12, 2001. It burned 316 acres of public land. The affected grazing allotment is the Twenty Five Allotment. The fire is within the Boulder Seeding and the Santa Renia Pasture. No structures were burned.

B. Vegetation and Soil Description:

The burned area ranges in elevation from 5,500 feet to 6,100 feet. Dominant vegetation within the burn area consists of low sagebrush, Wyoming big sagebrush, bluebunch wheatgrass, crested wheatgrass, Sandberg bluegrass, squirreltail bottlebrush, Thurber needlegrass, Great Basin wildrye, and cheatgrass.
In 1964-1965, the area within the Dee Gold Fire perimeter (X-283) received fire rehabilitation activities as a result of the 1964-1965 fire season. These fire rehabilitation actions consisted of the BLM seeding the area with three different treatments. The BLM aerial seed mixture for JDR 1072 consisted of alfalfa, yellow sweet clover, slender wheatgrass, western wheatgrass, intermediate wheatgrass, smooth brome, and Russian wildrye. The drill seed mixture for JDR 1081 consisted of only crested wheatgrass. The seed mixture for JDR 1090 consisted of crested wheatgrass, intermediate wheatgrass, and bitterbrush. The seeding treatment for this project included ripping the ground surface and then broadcast seeding.

The slopes range from 15-30 percent. Soils include cobbly loam, very cobbly loam, and very stony loam. These soils are shallow to moderately deep and well drained. Permeability is slow to very slow and runoff is rapid. Potential water erosion is high and potential wind erosion is slight to moderate. The soils after the fire are not hydrophobic.

Proposed Project Treatments:

A. Revegetation:

1. Monitoring to detect noxious weed invasion of burned areas:

Several small (less than 1 acre) of scotch thistle and hoary cress infestations exist on the lands adjacent to the Dee Gold Fire. Currently, the scotch thistle infestations are being treated. If further noxious weed infestations are detected after fire rehabilitation efforts, appropriate Integrated Pest Management (IPM) control measures would be implemented to control the invasion. In particular, any disturbed doze rlines and adjacent areas would be targeted for this noxious weed monitoring and subsequent treatment if weeds are detected.

B. Structures:

1. Fencing:

Approximately 0.5 miles of the Boulder Seeding Fence is within the burn perimeter. Two wooden post stress panels and one wooden post panel of a 3- panel corner burned in the fire. These stress panels and corner panel would be repaired to allow closure of the Boulder Seeding to grazing for a period to be determined by post-rehabilitation monitoring. This fence is needed to protect the Boulder Seeding to allow for vegetation to become reestablished and to maintain the integrity of the existing fence.

C. Erosion Control Treatments:

1. Dozer line rehabilitation:

Approximately 2 miles of dozer line would be rehabilitated by pushing back berms, regrading disturbed areas, and drill or aerial seed ed with Nordan crested wheatgrass and intermediate wheatgrass to reduce erosion and encourage revegetation.

D. Site Preparation: None

E Other:

1. Cultural resource inventories:

The entire area within the Dee Gold Fire has been intensively inventoried for cultural resources, and at least 5 sites have been recorded in or near the dozer lines or edge of the fire that are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. These sites should be revisited and assessed, so that they can be avoided during rehabilitation activities. Any damage to eligible sites would need to be mitigated through a data recovery or other programs.

Consideration of Critical Elements and Resources:

The following critical elements of the human environment are not present or are not affected by the proposed action or alternative:

ACECs
Environmental Justice
Farmlands, prime or unique
Floodplains
Wastes, hazardous/solid
Wetlands/Riparian Zones
Wild and Scenic Rivers
Wilderness

Critical elements and resources brought forward for analysis:

A. Air Quality:

The burned area would be susceptible to wind erosion until revegetation occurs. Wind erosion can increase Particulate Matter #10 (PM#10) emissions causing exceedence of PM #10 air quality standards which can negatively affect human health. In addition, airborne dust can cause visibility and safety problems on roads in the area. The proposed vegetation and erosion control treatments would encourage regrowth of vegetation, thus reducing future potential air quality impacts.

B. Cultural Resources:

The Dee Gold Fire occurred within an area known to archaeologists as the Central Great Basin which has been inhabited by humans for approximately 12,000 years. The area surrounding the Dee Gold Fire has been previously inventoried for cultural resources. The results of Class III inventories completed in this area are found in the following BLM reports: 1-484, 1-709, 1-1408, 1-1440, and 1-1891. The following cultural resource sites, which are located within the Dee Gold Fire perimeter, have been determined eligible to the National Register of Historic Places: CrNv-12-10449, 10462, 10464, 10465, and 10484. Cultural resources sites10462 and 10449 were driven through during fire suppression activities. A dozer line was bladed near the southern end of cultural resource site 10449. The existing road was bladed through cultural site 10449. Existing two track roads were bladed open in the vicinity of cultural resource sites10484, 10449, 10462, and 10444. These sites should be revisited and assessed, so that they can be avoided during rehabilitation activities. Any damage to National Register of Historic Places eligible sites would need to be mitigated through a data recovery or other programs.

Archaeological sites and cultural properties in this area must be afforded protection whenever possible. Section 106 of the Natural Historic Preservation Act mandates that the federal government would account for cultural resources in its projects and undertakings, including fire rehabilitation efforts. Ground disturbing activities such as dozer line rehabilitation, drill seeding, and fence construction could damage cultural sites. Resources except those previously determined not eligible by BLM and SHPO, or that have been fully mitigated, would be flagged for avoidance and avoided during rehabilitation activities. Flagging would be placed to minimize the potential for looting and vandalism and removed as soon as possible.

C. Native American Religious Concerns:

By law, policy and executive order, BLM is required to undertake a good-faith consultation process with regional Native American tribal and band governments prior to projects that might affect Native American sacred areas, Traditional Cultural Properties or other traditional values. Native Americans would be consulted as appropriate prior to any ground disturbing activities or herbicide treatments. If the BLM obtains information identifying Traditional Cultural Properties or other areas having traditional or religious significance, then the BLM would insure that reasonable measures are taken to avoid impacts to these areas of concern to Native Americans.

D. Threatened, Endangered, Candidate, or Sensitive Species:

No threatened or endangered plant species are known to occur in the burn area. The sage grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) has been designated by the BLM Nevada State Director as a sensitive species and therefore afforded the same protection as a candidate species. Although the suspected causes of sage grouse decline are numerous, loss of habitat, including loss by fire, ranks at the top of the list. Rehabilitation of sage grouse habitat, and the prevention of invasion by fire-prone annual weeds such as cheatgrass, is a wildlife priority of both BLM and the Nevada Department of Wildlife. The proposed seeding treatments and rest from grazing pressure are

designed to restore sagebrush habitat and/or reduce the impacts from the invasion or reinvasion of fire-prone annual weeds.

E. Migratory Birds

The proposed restorative actions are located in a sagebrush habitat type. The Nevada Partners in Flight Bird Conservation Plan identifies the following bird species associated with this physiographic region: sage grouse (obligate), black rosy finch, ferruginous hawk, gray flycatcher, loggerhead shrike, vesper sparrow, prairie falcon, sage sparrow, sage thrasher, Swainson's hawk, burrowing owl, calliope hummingbird, Brewer's sparrow, Western meadowlark, black-throated sparrow, lark sparrow, green-tailed towhee, Brewer's blackbird, horned lark, and lark sparrow.

The greatest threat to these sagebrush-dependant migratory bird species is type conversion of sagebrush communities. Maintaining complete, diverse sagebrush communities is integral to conservation efforts for these species. Low elevation sagebrush sites, such as the project area, are vulnerable to conversion to cheatgrass types following wildfire. The proposed action to reseed with aggressive perennial grasses to prevent cheatgrass from dominating the site, coupled with secondary efforts to re-establish sagebrush on the stabilized site (as necessary) should provide beneficial impacts to these species and is consistent with the conservation measures listed in Section 3(e) of the President's Migratory Bird Executive Order.

F. Visual Resources:

The proposed project treatment area is within Visual Resource Management Class IV and the objective of this class is to provide for management activities which require major modification of the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape can be high.

Within Class IV VRM areas, management activities may dominate the view and be the major focus of viewer attention. However, every attempt should be made to minimize the impact of these activities through careful location, minimal disturbance, and repeating the basic elements. Both the fire itself and fire suppression activities such as creation of dozer lines have resulted in visual impacts to the area. Revegetation efforts are designed to blend into the background without attracting undue attention and aid in restoring the area to a more characteristic landscape. S eeding the burned areas and dozer lines would serve to reduce the visual impacts in the area.

G. Wildlife:

Wildlife impacts resulting from the Dee Gold Fire are primarily through temporary loss of habitat through removal of vegetation by the fire. The proposed rehabilitation treatments include resting the area from livestock grazing and rehabilitation of the dozer lines. Sagebrush on the adjacent unburned lands would invade naturally into the burned area. The Dee Gold Fire was a low intensity burn resulting in little to no damage to the root crowns of the native vegetation.

Therefore, upon receipt of precipitation, native vegetation should resprout. In addition, aerial or drill seeding dozer lines would help establish vegetation within disturbed areas that could out compete exotic invading plant species, as well as prevent erosion.

H. Grazing:

The proposed closures to grazing within the burned area would protect seeding efforts and aid in natural revegetation of burned public rangeland, while reducing the potential for future noxious weed and cheatgrass infestations. Grazing closures would also improve future forage conditions for both livestock and wildlife. However, grazing closure and relocation of livestock would have some short term adverse impacts on ranchers in the area who normally use the allotment for grazing. The actual AUM losses suffered by ranchers have not been determined at this point. Through field inventories and monitoring, GIS analyses, and consultation, cooperation, and coordination with individual permittees, specific rest periods and other grazing management options would be identified to reduce impacts to ranchers where possible.

I. Water Quality, surface/ground:

Increased water erosion could occur on steeper slopes due to lack of vegetation to slow runoff and stabilize soils. Until vegetation is reestablished naturally within the burn perimeter in the spring, high intensity precipitation events could cause erosion and sedimentation increase in the intermittent drainage that lies along the western edge of the burn perimeter. This intermittent drainage is not expected to be impacted by this burn.

J. Invasive, Nonnative Species:

Fire suppression efforts, including dozer line construction and use of engines and other mechanized vehicles, may have introduced noxious weed species seeds, particularly scotch thistle and hoary cress, into the burned area. Small infestations of scotch thistle and hoary cress exist on lands adjacent to the burned area. No known infestations of noxious weeds currently exist within the burn perimeter. In order to reduce the potential impacts of an invasion of noxious weeds, approximately 100 acres of the Dee Gold burn should be monitored for noxious weeds. If noxious weeds are discovered to have invaded the burned area, Integrated Weed Management techniques would need to be implemented, including chemical treatments, to reduce the spread of the noxious weeds. The proposed noxious weed monitoring would help to prevent or reduce noxious weed invasions of the Dee Gold burned area.

K. Cumulative Impacts:

Cumulative impacts for proposed Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation treatments are discussed in the programmatic Elko Field Office FY 2000 Normal Fire Rehabilitation Plan Environmental Assessment (NFRPEA) BLM/EK/PL2000/037, which is available for review at the BLM Elko Field Office.

Project Cost Summary: (the cost summary information can be found in the Burned Area Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (BAER) Plan and Accomplishment Report for the August 2001 Fire Complex.)

Project Maps: (project maps can be found in the Burned Area Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (BAER) Plan and Accomplishment Report for the August 2001 Fire Complex.)

Cost/Risk Assessment: (the cost/risk assessment can be found in the Burned Area Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (BAER) Plan and Accomplishment Report for the August 2001 Fire Complex.)

Native/Nonnative Worksheet: (the native/nonnative worksheet can be found in the Burned Area Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (BAER) Plan and Accomplishment Report for the August 2001 Fire Complex.)